

Smart Growth Newsline

The Latest in Planning and Development from Massachusetts and Around the Nation

Office for Commonwealth Development

EPA scores with smart growth rating system

It's a common question and a sensible one: what is smart growth?

Any definition would include redevelopment of land, a mix of uses, a revitalization of town centers and downtowns, walkability, concentrated development and an orientation near transit where possible.

But the US Environmental Protection Agency has a new way to test out whether a proposed development is smart growth, or if local policies and zoning will deliver desired results.

The EPA compiled a set of smart growth scorecards and rating systems being used in communities across the country, and identified the tools that help cities and towns choose the strategies for beneficial growth.

Some scorecards help communities understand how the local regula-



tory climate impacts development patterns. Others are designed to determine if proposed new developments meet community-defined smart

growth goals.

The compilation is available at <http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/scorecards/index.htm>.

Included are scorecards from Vermont, Colorado, New Jersey, Cleveland, and the Smart Growth Leadership Institute. Also in the compilation are two Massachusetts rating systems, based in large part on the Sustainable Development Principles listed by the Office for Commonwealth Development: the Southeastern Massachusetts Vision 2020 Smart Growth

Audit, and the Cape Cod Growth Management Audit.

To be added to the compilation soon: Commonwealth Capital, the statewide system for screening \$500 million in annual grants and loans, so that capital infrastructure is steered to cities and towns engaged in smart growth. The Commonwealth Capital scorecard features 27 initiatives in eight categories: planning, zoning for compact development, expanding housing opportunities, redeveloping sites and buildings, conserving natural resources, water policy, working natural landscapes and the general promotion of sustainable development.

Nearly 280 cities and towns have filled out the Commonwealth Capital scorecard over the last two years of the program.

Parking Policies Reconsidered Across The US

Parking is a hot topic for communities revitalizing downtowns and town centers, or supporting transit-oriented development.

Many communities are finding that when it comes to parking, less is more – that is, minimum parking requirements of, for example, two spaces per home in residential development, don't make sense for many locations. From Pasadena, Calif., to Arlington, Va., districts are exploring new concepts such as shared parking and maximum parking requirements.

The online planning newsletter PLANETizen recently concluded a three-part series on parking, with a look at on-site parking requirements

and how such rules might be modified in the future. The article is available at <http://www.planetizen.com/node/19246>.

Other resources on parking include "Parking Spaces, Community Places: Finding the Balance through Smart Growth Solutions," available at <http://www.epa.gov/dced/parking.htm>; and

"Parking Alternatives: Making Way for Urban Infill and Brownfields Redevelopment," available at <http://www.smartgrowth.org/pdf/PRKGDE04.pdf>.



Shared parking facility
Photo courtesy of
www.pedbikeimages.org/
Dan Burden

Another Country Heard From Dept.: Realtors

The National Association of Realtors is stepping up efforts to promote revitalized neighborhoods and smart growth, following a high-profile role at the 5th Annual New Partners for Smart growth conference in Denver earlier this year.

"Growth patterns, economic development and quality of life issues are crucial to the success of communities," said Henry Ray Jr., vice president and liaison to government affairs for the association. Realtors from Ash Grove, Mo. And Memphis, Tenn., as well as association executives from Baltimore and York, Pa. made presenta-

tions at the conference on local community revitalization projects and homeownership initiatives.

According to an American Community Survey sponsored by the National Association of Realtors and SmartGrowth America in 2004, longer commutes to work prompted more Americans to seek out walkable neighborhoods in close-in suburbs and cities.

In the study, 79 percent of respondents said a commute time of 45 minutes or less was a top priority in deciding where to live. Seventy-two percent said a priority was having sidewalks and places to walk. Just over half said their priority was having a large home on one acre.



Smart Growth Districts, Via 40R, Catching On



The effort to increase the surplus of land zoned for higher density housing – Chapter 40R and Chapter 40S – is gaining momentum as many Massachusetts towns enter into town meeting season.

Writing in the March 27 issue of *Banker & Tradesman*, Ted Carman and Angus Jennings of Concord Square Development Co. cite their own research that shows over 7,000 potential new homes that could be built in smart growth locations, under 40R and 40S.

Under that legislation, passed last year, cities and towns that establish special zoning overlay districts that allow densities of 8 units/acre for single family homes, 12 units/acre for two/three family resi-

dences, and 20 units/acre for condominiums and apartments receive \$3,000 per new home created, plus up to \$600,000 in a lump-sum payment. Qualifying communities can also receive additional state funding to offset the cost of educating any children who move into the new districts.

The districts must be in town centers, downtowns, near a transit station, on unused industrial land or in other locations municipalities have deemed appropriate for higher density housing; they must be 20 percent affordable, and mixed-use development – the combination of residential, office and retail within close proximity – is encouraged.

At least 15 communities are investigating the creation of these districts, including Chelsea, Somerville, Plymouth and Norwood. In many towns the creation of these districts must be approved at town meeting. The value of 40R and 40S is seen

in the potential to create more housing and provide some relief from high prices by increasing supply, say Carman and Jennings. Large-lot residential development has had the opposite effect, and more communities are realizing that they like the sense of place and historical character of more compact and traditional neighborhood design.

"The opportunity to once again embrace these traditional neighborhood features – narrow, tree-lined streets, handsome single-family homes on small lots, well-maintained parks and commons – has captured the imagination of both planners and developers," Carman and Jennings write in the *Banker & Tradesman* essay. "We expect that over time, as nearby communities and others observe the construction of exceptional neighborhoods – in a form not widely seen in Massachusetts in over 50 years – there will be a ripple effect."

More information on Chapter 40R and 40S is available at www.mass.gov/ocd.

Previous editions of the *Smart Growth Newsline* are available at <http://www.mass.gov/ocd> in the [Smart Growth Newsline Archive](#)

SMART GROWTH CALENDAR FOR APRIL 2006



4/3-5/2006: **Funders Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities Annual Conference**, Chicago IL. For more information please visit <http://www.fundersnetwork.org>.



4/8/2006: **The 8th Annual New England Greenway Symposium** at the UMass Campus in Amherst. The symposium will include panel discussions from various state agencies, regional planning agencies and landscape architecture and planning firms involved with greenway planning and implementation. The program is available at <http://www.umass.edu/greenway/NEGWSymposium06.pdf>



For information on any of the **smart growth toolkit** sessions listed below please visit www.mass.gov/envir/sgtk.htm

- 4/7 Workshop: Zoning for Affordability /Inclusionary Zoning
- 4/11 Workshop: Stormwater Management on Cape Cod
- 4/13 Toolkit Session: Low Impact Development (at Neponset River Watershed Assoc.)
- 4/18 Workshop: Water Resource Management Conference
- 4/20 Toolkit Session: Traditional Neighbrhd. Design (at Pioneer Valley Planning Com)
- 4/24 Toolkit Session: Right to Farm and Ag commissions (at W. Brookfield Town Hall)
- 4/25 Toolkit Session: OSRD and LID (at Blackstone Public Library)
- 4/27 Toolkit Session: OSRD (at FRCOG in Greenfield)



4/22-26/2006 **American Planning Association 2006 National Planning Conference** in San Antonio, Texas. Features a vast array of workshops and sessions for a variety of different audiences from professional planners to students. For more information or to register visit <http://www.planning.org/2006conference/>

THE OFFICE FOR COMMONWEALTH DEVELOPMENT



Douglas I. Foy, first secretary of OCD (right) with Governor Mitt Romney

Office for Commonwealth Development
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 1010
Boston MA, 02114

<http://www.mass.gov/ocd>
Phone: 617-573-1380
Fax: 617-573-1399
Email: ocd@massmail.state.ma.us



For more information on the Smart Growth Hotline, a publication of Office for Commonwealth Development, please contact Anthony Flint, Director of Smart Growth Education at (617) 573-1395 or ocd@massmail.state.ma.us

The mission of the Massachusetts Office for Commonwealth Development (OCD) is to care for the built and natural environment by promoting sustainable development through the integration of energy, environmental, housing, and transportation agencies' policies, programs and regulations. OCD will encourage the coordination and cooperation of all agencies, invest public funds wisely in smart growth and equitable development, give priority to investments that will deliver living wage jobs, transit access, housing, open space, and community-serving enterprises, and be guided by a set of sustainable development principles.